UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Africa will develop with or without foreign aid, President of Uganda tells General Assembly special commemorative meeting.

* South African President says United Nations must reassess its role, redefine its profile and reshape its structures.

* United Nations affirms universal conscience through legal instruments and programmes of action, French President says.

* Brazilian President says now is time to renew Organization, citing end of ideological confrontation and growing convergence of values.

* General Assembly must be highest authority of United Nations, President of Viet Nam stresses.

* United Nations needs new focus on efficiency and modernized scale of assessments, United Kingdom Prime Minister states.

* Prime Minister of Bangladesh says preserving security of small and weak States requires strengthening rule of law.

* German Foreign Minister says mankind must succeed or fail together, citing unbridged gap between rich and poor.

* Foreign Minister of Egypt warns existence of double standards undermines credibility of international order.

* Secretary-General has meetings with President of United States and Prime Minister of United Kingdom at Headquarters.

* High Commissioner for Human Rights announces new measures to strengthen human rights activities in former Yugoslavia.

* Arrangements for establishment of Rwanda Commission of Inquiry are complete, Secretary-General reports.

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For information media—not an official record

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The General Assembly today continued its series of special meetings commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The first speaker of the day, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda, said Africa would develop with or without foreign aid. While aid was an obligation for the West to compensate for the plunder of the continent in the past, it was not a sine qua non of development. He stressed that the greatest structural constraint on Africa's growth in the last 35 years had been the phenomenon of state intervention in business.

President Museveni said the answer to structural distortion was: democratic governance; a liberal economic policy that gave maximum freedom to entrepreneurs; universal education; infrastructure, especially roads, utilities and health facilities; and regional integration of markets, to stimulate economies. He went on to say that many of the tragedies in Africa had been caused by a confluence of foreign meddling and local opportunism. He commended the United Nations for its role in maintaining peace in the last 50 years.

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The President of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, said statespersons must dare to think that what they were about was people -- the proverbial man and woman in the street. "These -- the poor, the hungry, the victims of petty tyrants, the objectives of policy -- demand change," he continued. It was necessary to ensure that no one enjoyed lesser rights, that no one was tormented because they were born different, held contrary political views or prayed to God in a different manner. "For no one, in the North or the South, can escape the cold fact that we are a single humanity."

The United Nations had to reassess its role, redefine its profile and reshape its structures, President Mandela stressed. It should reflect diversity and ensure equality among nations, particularly in the Security Council. The agenda and programme of action for the next century could be true to the purposes of the Organization only if set by all. "We must, without delay, constitute a new leadership for the new age, and bring sunshine into the hearts of billions, including women, the disabled and children," he concluded.

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The President of France, Jacques Chirac, today expressed his country's confidence in and commitment to the United Nations. He told the Special Commemorative meeting of the Assembly that the Organization affirmed a universal conscience that was reflected in legal instruments and programmes of action. Its irreplaceable nature was most marked in the vast area of human rights and solidarity among peoples. He emphasized France's commitment to

genuine disarmament and to the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty in 1996. Once its final series of nuclear tests was completed, France would sign the protocols to the Rarotonga Treaty establishing a denuclearized zone in the South Pacific.

The aims of the Charter had lost none of their relevance over the last fifty years, Mr. Chirac continued. Peace and disarmament, democracy and development, the furtherance of human rights and the fight against the scourges that threatened mankind had been asserted as a body of common values. Now, Member States must focus their efforts on adapting and renewing the Organization, primarily by giving it the resources to operate. He added that the Security Council should be made more representative, with the inclusion of Germany, Japan and some large States from the South as permanent members.

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President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil stressed that now was the time to renew the United Nations. The international agenda was free from the tensions of ideological confrontation, and was characterized by a growing convergence of values, with democracy, economic freedom and social justice at centre stage. The Organization would always play an irreplaceable role in international peace and security.

All countries should contribute to make sure that the United Nations had the means to carry out the tasks entrusted to it, he stressed. It was unacceptable that the Organization was undergoing its most serious financial crisis precisely when the leaders of the world had gathered to reaffirm their commitment to its Charter. The international community was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary with an underlying feeling of ambiguity as the United Nations had to resort to expediency to cover its huge deficits. Brazil was committed to fighting for a stronger, more active Organization.

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The President of Viet Nam, Le Duc Anh, said the purposes and principles of the United Nations constituted the common values of all mankind. Adherence to such values was all the more important when international exchanges were intensifying. Paradoxically, just when mankind had acquired the technology to reduce the distance between Earth and other celestial bodies, the gap between the rich and the poor had widened. Having experienced famine and decades of war and embargo, Viet Nam empathized with the sufferings of other peoples. It joined the call for the international community to strive for the universal enjoyment of the fundamental rights to peace, equality and development.

The United Nations could boast remarkable achievements in the maintenance of international peace and security, decolonization, and the promotion of environmental, cultural, educational and humanitarian activities, he continued. However, the Organization itself should be revitalized. The

General Assembly must be the highest authority of the United Nations, responsible for questions related to international peace and security, cooperation for development and other global issues. United Nations agencies also needed renovating, and should be made to operate more effectively, with greater dynamism and transparency, within the framework of the Charter and General Assembly resolutions.

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Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom said his country was the largest contributor of peace-keepers, with over 8,000 troops serving in Bosnia alone. The United Nations needed to look ahead to confront challenges to peace and deal more effectively with the root causes of crises. It should encourage democratic and accountable government, reduce poverty and protect the environment, and tackle the evils of international crime, drug-trafficking and terrorism. That was a demanding agenda which required a properly financed and efficient Organization.

The United Nations must be reformed in order to succeed, as future threats would come more from inertia than from change, the Prime Minister said. The Organization was spread too wide, with too much waste and duplication by different bodies. It should improve planning, manning and financing of peace-keeping, as well as the machinery for pre-empting conflicts. Member States should not enjoy representation without taxation, he stressed. Contributions should be paid promptly and in full, with arrears cleared. That action should be accompanied by a new focus on efficiency, and by modernizing assessments to reflect the changing capacity of countries to pay. The General Assembly should hold a special session next year to address those issues.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh stressed her country's unswerving commitment to the United Nations, and support for the reform and restructuring of its main organs. She said it was ironic that when so many world leaders had gathered to solemnly pledge their commitment to the Charter, crucial decisions on mankind's destiny were being made by a handful of countries. Strengthening the rule of law was critical to preserving the security of smaller and weaker States. That required an enhanced role for the International Court of Justice, with measures for compulsory jurisdiction or arbitration through the Court.

More than 40 million people in Bangladesh were facing poverty and destruction due to the loss of the Ganges waters following India's unilateral withdrawal at Farakka, the Prime Minister went on to say. While the withdrawal of water in the dry season caused drought, its release in excessive amounts in the rainy season created severe floods. The Farakka Barrage had become an issue of life and death. "As the whole world voices concern for the

protection of the environment and human rights, at that very moment a big part of Bangladesh's population is being pushed to the threshold of poverty and destruction," she concluded. "This is a gross violation of human rights and justice."

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German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said history did not always follow the straight path of reason, but it sometimes provided near-miraculous opportunities. One such unique gift was the ending of the East-West conflict. That freed the world from the fear of a nuclear inferno and gave nations new opportunities for self-determination, peaceful cooperation and sustainable development. However, many of those opportunities remained unfulfilled because the gap between rich and poor had not been bridged.

"Never was it so abundantly clear that the only choice open to mankind is to succeed together or fail together," Mr. Kinkel continued. "And that is why we must renew and strengthen the covenant of San Francisco, the covenant for peace, human rights and development, for the joint survival of the human race." He stressed that the world had no alternative to the United Nations. In order to overcome its financial and structural crisis, the Organization needed the support, and not only the criticism, of its Member States.

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Foreign Minister Amre Moussa of Egypt said much had been achieved in the past 50 years. Within the framework of the United Nations, decolonization had been brought about and apartheid ended. Despite such successes, hegemony, aggression, racial discrimination and religious intolerance still beset the world. The widening gap between North and South portended a global division between rich and poor. The world still suffered from the existence of nuclear weapons and the continuation of nuclear practices on the one hand, and a lack of resolve when dealing with human rights on the other. It was in these two areas that serious inequities in the present and emerging world orders appeared -- namely double standards.

Mr. Moussa warned that humanity was poised on a powder keg that was about to explode. It was therefore necessary to build up the credibility of the international order so as to instill confidence among peoples everywhere. "When we talk about peace, let us truly mean it; when we talk about development, let us put it into effect; when we talk about human rights, let us refrain from resorting to double standards; and when we talk about disarmament, let us include all under the present binding international regimes, without exception."

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met yesterday at Headquarters with United States President William Clinton, according to a United Nations spokesman. They had a broad exchange of views on world issues, including the situations in Haiti, Angola, Guatemala, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan.

The Secretary-General and the President dealt with the situation in the former Yugoslavia, and expressed the hope that a peaceful settlement would soon be achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also discussed the financial crisis of the United Nations and reviewed recent positive developments in the Middle East. President Clinton expressed strong support for the continuum of major conferences held by the United Nations.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali today had a meeting with United Kingdom Prime Minister John Major, which was devoted entirely to the Organization's financial crisis. Mr. Major said his country would continue to work with Sweden on the review of the scale of assessments, and reiterated his view that all Member States should pay their contributions in full and on time.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, has announced a series of new measures designed to strengthen human rights activities in the former Yugoslavia. He made the announcement in a statement to the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva last week.

Mr. Ayala Lasso said he intended to: establish a dialogue with interested partners -- governments, United Nations agencies and programmes, European organizations and non-governmental organizations -- to develop a comprehensive human rights action plan for the former Yugoslavia; increase the presence of human rights staff in Zagreb, Mostar, Sarajevo and Skopje; and hold discussions with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) on the establishment of a continuous human rights presence throughout the Republic.

"As we move towards peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, concerted and determined efforts will have to be deployed by the international community to ensure respect for human rights," he continued. "Gross and massive violations have characterized and indeed fuelled the conflict. As High Commissioner for Human Rights, I consider it essential that human rights constitute a pillar of the reconstruction effort."

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Arrangements for the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry to investigate reports of arms transfers to former Rwandan government forces have been completed, according to the Secretary-General. In a letter to the Security Council President dated 20 October, he said the Commission would consist of six members: Ambassador Mahmoud Kassem, Egypt (Chairman); Inspector Jean-Michel Hanssens, Canada; Colonel Jurgen Almeling, Germany; Lt. Colonel Jan Meijvogel, Netherlands; Brigadier Mujahid Alam, Pakistan; Colonel Lamek Mutanda, Zimbabwe.

A United Nations spokesman said the members of the Commission were expected to assemble in New York on 30 October. They were expected to depart for Kigali on 2 November to begin their work. The Commission would be supported by a small support staff, including a legal expert and a security officer.

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